

In Memoriam

MICHAEL MOSES MADESKER, RDP, FRPSC, FRPSL

(July 28, 1925 - December 27, 2021)

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WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DEBBIE MADESKER WRONZBERG

George Bernard Shaw is credited with the observation that youth is wasted on the young. In philately, we talk a lot about the next generation and frequently pay lip service to youth philately. Michael Madesker walked the talk. Since the early 1950s he spent a lifetime promoting youth philately culminating in his unprecedented 12-year presidency of the *Fédération Internationale de Philatélie's* (FIP) Commission for Youth Philately (1992-2004). Youth philately matured in the Americas and around the world because of him. However, this is not his only achievement in our hobby.

Lithuanian-born Canadian Michael Madesker was a holocaust survivor. He was born in Vilno (Vilnius), Lithuania, the only child of Ruwin and Mina, the owners of a hardware store. Seeking a better life for themselves upon liberation, Michael and his parents immigrated to Canada and landed in Sydney, NS, in 1947. His thirst for knowledge and desire for education led him to McMaster University in Hamilton, ON, where he completed, on a scholarship, a BA in Biology (1951) and an MA in Philosophy and Russian Literature (1964). His published thesis was titled, *Romanticism and Realism in Pushkin's Evgenii Onegin*.

Between his two stints at McMaster, he attended the University of Toronto but did not complete his studies because his father asked him for help in establishing the family business, R. Madesker & Son, Ltd. The company sold florists' supplies and gift wares and later expanded into

ordering products from overseas and importing product for competitors. When the business closed in 1986, Michael joined the TD bank until his retirement in 1994.

A Fellow of The Royal Philatelic Society, London (RPSL) (1979) and of The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada (RPSC) (1979), he was also a signatory of The Roll of Distinguished Philatelists (2000), the seventh Canadian to do so. He served as Senior Fellow of The RPSC from 2006 to his passing. These awards



Signing the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists (2000).

recognized some of his many accomplishments and established him as a tireless, devoted, and knowledgeable member of the international philatelic community. While his personal collecting interests were vast: stamp booklets of Canada; parcel post of German States (1725-1870), the postal history of Venice (1400-1797), etc., his unparalleled passion for youth philately was exceptional in its focus. As a result of his personal experiences,



Michael was multilingual, an asset that served him well in the realm of philately. More than a passing interest, his attachment to philately began at the knees of his grandfather, an early postal historian.

Between 1960 and 1975, Michael was a frequent guest of Doug Patrick's CBC Stamp Club. During these broadcasts, he had the opportunity to share his knowledge and establish his interest in working with young people. His devotion to youth and humanity was exemplified in the work he did with the handicapped and underprivileged children. Michael's relationship with these groups dated back to 1969. At the invitation of Variety Village, he established seminars and teaching sessions at Bloorview Hospital, serving the handicapped, as well as the Alexandra and Downsview libraries, serving the underprivileged population.

Michael's reputation only grew because of these programmes and therefore he was asked to create a youth programme for The RPSC. As this endeavour spread throughout Canada, so did his name. Under the patronage of the FIP, he was put in charge of both the International Youth Exhibitions held in Canada: Toronto in 1982 and Montreal in 1992—the only two held outside Europe at the time. During his tenure as President of the FIP Commission for Youth Philately, Michael was

asked to initiate a youth movement in Asia, as he had successfully done in Canada. FIP's hope was that the world's youth would one day compete on equal footing, thus attracting more individuals to the hobby. To accomplish this task, Michael established common standards under which all countries could manage their youth philately. His *Guidelines to Judging Youth Exhibits in the Various Philatelic Fields* became the operating manual and was published by the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately (FIAP) in 1996. Since then, the *Guidelines* have been translated into four other languages including French and Spanish.

He named his approach and methodology *Subject-Specific*. To properly disseminate it, Michael went about training existing FIP accredited judges as well as rounding up volunteers to assist youth in preparation of their collections. He created and led many seminars on Youth Philately in Europe and North America before heading to Asia. Beginning in 1994, he spent many weeks in China, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Thailand, often returning many times at the request of the philatelic leaders of these countries. Consequently, most Asian youth exhibitors have a flawless research methodology and, on many occasions, have walked away with the Grand Prix/Award trophies at various Youth and World philatelic exhibitions.

As a result of the success of the *Guidelines* and the seminars, a second volume was asked for. A visual companion was created by Michael to better explain the organizational points of an exhibit. He sought to combine his knowledge and expertise with those of Shi Weilin (Secretary General and Vice-President of the All-China Philatelic Federation) when creating this new publication. As a result of this collaboration the manual was published in 1999. It also has been translated into several languages. In 2001, he translated into English and edited

a new edition of *An Introduction to Youth Philately*, originally prepared by the Federation of Swiss Philatelic Societies.

While one would expect Michael's contributions to be limited to that of youth philately, he has also exhibited great interest in the betterment of the whole hobby in Canada and its reputation abroad. He founded and presided over STAMPEX (Canada's National Philatelic Exhibition) between 1977 and 1988. He also was an instrumental partner and incomparable worker on the team that successfully bid for the three World Philatelic Exhibitions held in Canada in 1978, 1987 and 1996.

telic Achievement, the FIP Medal of Service, the Smithsonian Institute's Achievement Award and countless other awards, Michael's philatelic work propelled Canada's philatelic reputation to a higher level than it ever has been. His outstanding leadership, mentoring, superior management and organizational skills, vast knowledge and unrelenting commitment were all traits that reflected well on Canadian and Youth philately.

In 1956 he met Sylvia (Sue) Goldberg on a blind date. They were married a few short months later and are the parents of Arlene, Debbie and Greg. When he became a grandfather, he is reported to have



Madesker and the six Canadian who preceded him as RDPs. Top row from left, Fred Jarrett, OC (1935), Senator James Alexander Calder, PC (1947) and Gerald E. Wellburn. Bottom row from left, Vincent Graves Greene (1963), Harrys Sutherland, QC (1991) and Kenneth E. Rowe (1995).

His many writings on his areas of collecting interest have brought him many awards including the Geldert Medal for philatelic authorship and the Dubé Medal for philatelic literature.

He served as a Director of The RPSC from 1976 to 2000, serving as The RPSC's President from 1989 to 1992. During his tenure he promoted bilingualism in The RPSC and ensured that its magazine had a bilingual name and bilingual content.

Recipient of The Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, The RPSC's President Medal for Outstanding Phila-

referred thereafter to his children as the "middlemen". His daughter Debbie defines him as, "the consummate gentleman, honest and kind, generous to a fault, stubborn as they come, one heck of a chef, and a joke teller, even if often he was the only one that laughed. He had his own unique fashion, dapper most days, but then there were the Bermuda shorts, knee high socks and sandal days."

To Sue and his family, including his beloved grandchildren and great grandchildren, we offer our most heartfelt condolences. ☐